



MEMORANDUM

P.O. Box 4100 ♦ FRISCO, COLORADO 80443

TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL

FROM: NORA GILBERTSON, EVENTS MANAGER
VANESSA AGEE, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

RE: COLORADO BBQ CHALLENGE DISCUSSION

DATE: September 28, 2021

Summary and Background: Frisco's Colorado BBQ Challenge was founded 28 years ago by a group of local residents, and this event has since grown into a one night and two day event that attracts 12,000 to 14,000 attendees. The event is also now sanctioned by the Kansas City BBQ Society (KCBS) with 65+ competing teams and 80 certified judges participating each year and attracting the top competitive BBQ teams in the nation. The event has traditionally been held over Father's Day weekend, kicking-off with a Thursday night local's focused concert intended to animate part of Main Street while set up is happening for the next day's festivities and to act as a dress rehearsal for systems and staging before the Friday of the BBQ Challenge. The event then runs from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm on Friday and from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm on Saturday. Those two days include nine free concerts, pig races, the Bacon Burner 6k, chef demos, street performers, bouncy houses, a mechanical bull, a firefighter cook-off, and a ticketed whiskey tour in which participants are given an opportunity to learn cooking tips from competitors while sipping on Breckenridge Distillery whiskey.

As stated above, this event started with a small group of locals grilling BBQ together for fun at the Frisco Historic Park. The following year this group of dedicated local BBQers decided to charge a small fee for their food and give that money to local non-profits, establishing the charitable focus of this event which has persisted through the years. For example in 2019, this event partnered with six local non-profits, which provided labor vital to executing this event, resulting in over \$50,000 going to the following organizations: Advocates for Victims of Assault, High Country Conservation Center, Mountain Mentors, the Summit County Restaurant Association, Summit County Chamber of Commerce, and Women of the Summit. Also, the Summit County Seniors ran a margarita booth as a fundraiser taking advantage of booth space which is available to local non-profits for \$100 for the weekend. This event is also supported by over 400 volunteers each year who work in a variety of positions from pouring beer to selling Hogback tickets.

The Colorado BBQ Challenge attracts cooks, judges, volunteers, and attendees from across the nation; a 2018 event survey conducted by RRC during the event, specified that 36% of respondents were overnight visitors. Also, the media coverage of this event is significant and provides a unique opportunity to tell the story of Frisco generally and get editorial coverage and reach that would be cost prohibitive to purchase. In 2019, there were 86 pieces of media and influencer coverage surrounding BBQ Challenge producing 40,385,697 total potential impressions. This event has been understood as the “start of summer” in Summit County, and interest in this coverage is strategically leveraged not just to attract BBQ attendees, but to signal that Frisco is a destination for travel, which in turn supports economic development.

Analysis:

The COVID 19 pandemic and the related public health orders resulted in the cancellation of the BBQ Challenge in 2020 and 2021. The cancellation or revamping of most events starting in March 2020 created a space for discussion and re-evaluation events; this comprehensive Town Council took place during a worksession meeting on February 23, 2021. During that discussion, Town Council directed staff to return with a discussion specific to the BBQ Challenge in order to better understand the event’s current relevance to the Town, its importance to the community, its relational value to the community’s character and values, and its economic impact.

In preparation for this discussion, a survey was conducted to gain information about the BBQ Challenge. The survey questions were review and edited by RRC Associates, and the survey was distributed through e-newsletters, social media, and traditional media coverage. The results were then analyzed by RRC Associates, a company which specializes in custom market research, analysis and consulting solutions. This report, in addition to the open ended answers to the survey question “are there other suggestions that you would like Frisco Town Council to consider as they discuss BBQ Challenge in the future?”, are included in the Council packet.

Summary of the 2021 Survey Report

There were 1,793 survey responses, which is an unusually high level of response compared to past Town surveys on a variety of issues. 14% of respondents reported owning a business in Frisco and 56% of those respondents have a business on Main Street.

40% of the respondents are full-time residents of Frisco (70% of that group also own a business in Frisco), 18% live in Summit County but not in Frisco (17% of that group also own a business in Frisco), 21% of respondents live outside of Summit County but in Colorado (5% of that group own a business in Frisco), 5% live outside of Colorado, and 16% are second homeowners in Frisco who live full-time elsewhere (8% of that group own a business in Frisco).

Business owners were most likely to report that the BBQ Challenge had a positive impact on business. About 30% reported no impact, and one in five (20%) said there was a negative impact. Most restaurant/bar owners reported a positive impact (59%), while retail business owners were most likely to cite a negative impact (50% negative and 18% positive impact).

Nearly three quarters (73%) of business owners believe the effect of past BBQ Challenges has been positive or very positive from a public relations and community standpoint. Fourteen percent believe the impact has been negative/very negative, while 14% are neutral. Business owners on Main Street gave comparable but slightly more negative responses.

Both business owners and non-owners were asked to rate their satisfaction with the event. Business owners were less likely to be satisfied/dissatisfied than residents (69% compared to

85%), but the key finding is that both groups were generally satisfied. Overall, 9% expressed dissatisfaction (1/2 on the five points scale). Business owners on Main Street were slightly more negative (23% rating it a 1 /2 compared to 14% of business respondents from other areas). Residents of Frisco and residents of Summit County expressed the greatest dissatisfaction (15% and 12%) respectively, but even among these segments those that were satisfied far exceeded those dissatisfied.

87% of respondents that do not own businesses in Frisco would “like to see the event remain in Frisco.” About 64% of business owners recorded this opinion, but with 9% unsure. One in five business owners (22%) said they would not like to see the BBQ event remain in Frisco. Importantly, while 73% of full time Frisco residents would like to see the event remain in Frisco, and 82% of Summit County residents feel this way, respondents from beyond Summit County (including second homeowners) are strongly in favor of the event remaining in Frisco (93% to 97%).

The full report and answers to the open ended question regarding what Frisco Town Council might consider are included in the packet providing a more complete snapshot. The results seem to signal that the community is certainly open to some change and evolution with this event.

Financial Impact:

Depending on the direction that Council provides and the revenue generated if a 2022 event goes forward, the net expenses could range from \$100,000 to \$200,000. It is challenging to predict the demand and subsequent revenue of a re-booted event after a two year break.

- In 2018, the net expense was \$123,198- the \$123,198 includes a \$70,541 donation to non-profits, which provided event services.
- In 2019, the net expense was \$107,984- the \$107,984 includes a \$73,805 donation to non-profits, which provided event services.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Inclusive Community: This event is free to attend which makes it more attainable to people of all incomes, and children’s activities have always been kept at a low cost or free in order to make it more accessible.

Thriving Economy: There are positive short-term economic development impacts on businesses during the event weekend, notably on lodging businesses and restaurants. Also, robust media coverage creates a long-term impact on Frisco, which keeps Frisco on a travelers’ lists of places to visit in the long-term and not just over this event weekend.

Vibrant Culture, Arts and Recreation: Music, street performers, and the Bacon Burner 5k have been components of the BBQ Challenge.

Environmental Sustainability:

The BBQ Challenge has a significant environmental impact, and this has been used to provide an opportunity to teach attendees about responsible waste management with the assistance of High Country Conservation Center’s volunteers. Also, since 2018 attendees have been encouraged to carpool by providing Hogback incentives to those who do so. Yet, the premise of this event revolves around meat consumption, which has been shown to have negative impacts on the climate change as gases produced during livestock farming have been shown to contribute to climate change.

Staff Recommendation: Staff is seeking direction from Town Council about the future of the Colorado BBQ Challenge and the following three options:

- 1) Status quo: This would be leaving the event as it is.
- 2) Back to Basics: This would mean bringing the event back in a simpler form and closer to its roots by focusing on the elements which have been identified as important by survey respondents, BBQ food and libations, music, and meeting with friends. Kids' activities were ranked fairly low so these would no longer be a part of the event, along with a number of other components which were added in later years.
 - Limiting vending opportunities to BBQ vendor and possibly complimentary food categories such as dessert vendors, but eliminate "carnival" oriented food such as funnel cakes, corn dogs, etc... This would make the KCBS involvement even more vital, as the Frisco BBQ event is a path to the American Royal and is vital to attracting BBQ vendors. This may also inherently result in shrinking the event footprint due to less vendors.
 - Eliminating ancillary events, such as bounce houses, the Firefighter Cook-Off, chef demos, the whiskey tour, the sponsor brunch, and likely pig races, which may no longer be allowed in Colorado due to recent legislation. As the Bacon Burner 6k supports the community's values around recreation and occurs offsite at the Marina and Town rec paths, this component could continue if desired.
 - Music would continue to be a focus with local musicians earlier in the day and bigger acts later.
 - Also, the creation of more comfortable, shadier, and larger seating areas to be used as gathering spaces would be a focus and current Promenade infrastructure could be used to create some of this space to encourage community/friends gathering. To animate these areas and the spaces beyond the stage, it may make sense to keep street performers as part of the programming.
- 3) Elimination of the BBQ Challenge from the Frisco event calendar and an effort to find the event a different home outside of Frisco.

Approved By:

Tony O'Rourke, Town Manager
Bonnie Moinet, Finance Director

Attachments:

2021 BBQ Event Sentiment Survey
2019 Recap of BBQ Media and Influencer Coverage
2018 BBQ Event Intercept Attendee & Merchant Survey